

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph • Year B • December 27, 2020



*Almighty God,
you guard our hearts
and homes.
Raise us in faith.
Bind us ever closer to you
in truth and love.
Teach us
by your holy word
to be a people
of justice and peace,
honoring one another
with heartfelt kindness.*

Sunday Word

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3
Psalm 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19
Luke 2:22-40 (or, short form, 2:22, 39-40)

Faith in the Lord

Though he could not see how the Lord's promise would be fulfilled, Abram put his faith in the Lord, who promises that his descendants shall be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Faith in the Home

Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac were a family who put their faith in God. This reading recalls specific examples of times when they did so.

Faith in the Promise

In the longer form of today's Gospel reading we learn of Simeon and Anna, two people of faith who hoped, prayed, and trusted for years that God's promise to send the one who would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" and "the redemption of Jerusalem".

Catholic Teaching: The Duties of Family Members

Parents and Children in God's Plan

The ties that bind together the members of a family are a universal reality. The gift of life owed by children to their parents—whether children are biologically engendered or adopted—cannot be repaid in kind. The gift of life given through responsible, loving parenthood can only be repaid by honor, respect, and reverence on the part of children toward their parents.

This stance of children to their parents, as called for in the Fourth Commandment, finds its basis in the divine parenthood of God the Father to all humanity. Filial piety flows from humanity's relationship with God, who has set parents as authority figures over their children in a loving household. Respectful children have the duty therefore to obey their parents.

In this context, *authority* does not imply that parents enjoy an arbitrary, unlimited power over their children. Parents are to responsibly exercise their fatherhood and motherhood such that a home is created by them where tenderness, forgiveness, mutual respect, and fidelity rule, guiding the attitudes and behaviors of the family. Paternal and maternal instincts must be honed and refined so that parents give good example to their children, guiding them in the ways of the Lord.

Parents, the First Teachers of Their Children

The role of parents is pivotal in educating their children. Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. The loving, mature, and spiritual household created by parents becomes the foundation and bulwark for raising children. Such parents raise children who are personally strengthened to withstand the degrading influences of a society that does not necessarily uphold Christian values.

It is thus a duty and a privilege of Christian parents to become the initial heralds of the mysteries of faith, that is, to be the first evangelizers of their children. Indeed, a wholesome family atmosphere established from the earliest years of childhood, reinforces the message conveyed later by pastors, teachers, and catechists.

Reciprocal Love

This network of graced relationships within the family, begun in childhood, comes to fruition later as adults when children care for their mature or aged parents, rendering them material and moral support in times of illness, loneliness, or distress. The life nurtured by the holy duties of parents comes full circle when grateful children support parents in their need.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Commandment to honor parents cannot be fully explained without reference to Christ's two-fold Great Commandment. We honor our parents because Christ affirms that the greatest Commandment of them all is to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul. And linked to the Great Commandment is that we must love our neighbor as our self. Christian families are built upon the fulfillment of this two-fold Commandment of love. All members of the family are to build one another up into a holy household committed to the Kingdom of God.

Key Terms

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Honor your father and mother. One of the Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses. The Ten Commandments are summarized in the two-fold Great Commandment of Jesus. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2052.)

FILIAL PIETY

Attitude of respect and reverence children show to their parents. The practice of such respect brings both spiritual and temporal fruits to individuals and society. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2200.)

DOMESTIC CHURCH

The human family seen as a community of faith, hope and charity. Since the beginnings of the Church, the family has been regarded as a privileged community within which faith and charity can flourish for the good of all. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2204.)

Voices of Faith

According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.

—Saint John Paul II

How do we keep our faith as a family? Do we keep it for ourselves, in our families, as a personal treasure like a bank account, or are we able to share it by our witness, by our acceptance of others, by our openness? . . . Christian families are missionary families. . . . They are missionary in everyday life, in their doing everyday things, as they bring to everything the salt and the leaven of faith.

—Pope Francis

Further Reading

***Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 2217 (obeying parents), 2218 (adult children toward elderly parents), 2223 (parental duties)

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*:**

Chapter Twenty-eight (Fourth Commandment: Strengthen Your Family), especially the sections entitled "Children's Love for their Parents," pages 377-378 and "Parents' Love for their Children," pages 378-379

***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*:**

456 (domestic Church), 461 (parents promote faith by example)